



A Slice of Neighborhood Networks Life

Health Care That's Very Close to Home

Sometimes, it can be a lack of transportation that comes between an individual and medical treatment. Other times, someone just might be too sick or disabled to travel.

Whatever those barriers are, they were lifted for residents at Plumley Village in Worcester, MA, where health care is just steps away.

Here, an on-site medical clinic operates five days a week serving the 1,600 residents of this HUD housing development and the surrounding neighborhood.

Here, residents and property management partnered with the Medical Center of Central Massachusetts, now UMass Memorial Health Care, to establish Plumley Village Health Services. Since 1992, the clinic has made it easier for residents to receive primary care and preventive health care services by improving access to it.

Plumley Village

Plumley Village is a 430-unit, federally subsidized family housing development in downtown Worcester. Today, most residents are Spanish-speaking; most of them immigrated from Puerto Rico.

In the early 1980s, Plumley Village had a reputation as a "problem development," one beset by the conditions of a disadvantaged community. Drug activity was rampant, unemployment was high and the property was rapidly deteriorating.

Those conditions changed in 1988 under the then-new ownership and property management of The Community Builders, Inc. In addition to site improvements, The Community Builders responded to the needs of residents and encouraged the development of a strong resident council.

Plumley Village Health Services is a product of that effort. In fact, Plumley Village has emerged as a flagship site for resident services throughout the property manager's 10,000-unit portfolio.

Plumley Village's Neighborhood Networks Center

An important component of the positive changes at Plumley Village was the development of the Plumley Village Center for Education and Employment Opportunities -- a Neighborhood Networks center at the site.

Neighborhood Networks is a community-based initiative of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). It encourages the establishment of resource and computer centers that provide health and social services, education and job training to residents of HUD-assisted and/or -insured properties.

Like all of the more than 600 other Neighborhood Networks centers nationwide, the one at Plumley Village provides programs, activities and opportunities expressly developed for the residents who live there. In addition to health services, this Neighborhood Networks center provides job training, GED preparation and computer training. All activities are developed to move residents toward economic self-sufficiency.

About the Health Care Partnership

Plumley Village Health Services was established in 1992. A satellite clinic of UMass Memorial Health Care, the clinic is located at Plumley Village in space provided by the property's owner.

UMass Medical Center, which serves the region, is one of five university campuses. It is comprised of the University of Massachusetts Medical School, UMass Hospital, clinics, a graduate school of biomedical sciences and nursing, and a program in molecular medicine.

To find out more

about how Neighborhood Networks centers are helping residents of HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing in the areas of education, social services, employment, transportation, child care and microenterprise development, visit the Neighborhood Networks website at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org or call the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free at (888) 312-2743.

Satellite health centers, like the one at Plumley Village, are becoming more and more important in the delivery of health care to underserved communities throughout the nation.

Early intervention and identification are undisputed "pluses" in health care. By reaching out to the community, UMass Memorial Health Care makes care more accessible, providing primary and preventive health care that potentially can be delivered before the onset of a significant or even life-threatening medical condition. As a result, access to on-site care reduces the demand for emergency room treatment.

Good health has many benefits, and at Plumley Village, good health is the underpinning for positive work and school experiences for residents.

Teaming Up to Create Plumley Village Health Services

When Plumley Village Health Services was new, its organizers identified the needs of residents and used those findings to set the clinic's priorities. The goals of the new health center were to:

- Provide on-time immunizations for the 900 children living at Plumley Village;
- Provide substance abuse counseling and treatment;

- Help curb teenage pregnancy; and
- Provide regular access to a physician.

The first staff person was an outreach worker who assessed the needs of residents, performed the survey and made referrals to community services. It quickly became apparent that there was a need for more than just a referral service to the nearest UMass clinic. By 1993, a physician assistant was hired to provide and coordinate on-site primary care services.

Neighborhood Networks Facts...

WHAT: Neighborhood Networks is a community-based initiative launched by HUD's Office of Multifamily Housing in September 1995. It encourages the development of resource and computer centers in HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing.

- More than 620 centers in operation*
- Thousands of business, community and government partners
- More than 744 properties with centers in planning*

WHO: Serves HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing residents, owners, managers, partners and communities.

*as of 08/00



Randy Wertheimer, M.D., Vice Chair, Department of Family Medicine and Community Health at UMass Memorial Health Care, is shown with Ellen Ruell, Director, Plumley Village Health Services.

How Plumley Village Health Services Serves Residents

By the mid-1990s, Plumley Village Health Services was serving patients five days a week. In 1998, there were 1,435 patient visits, including 424 for pediatric care and 395 for family planning services.

To meet the growing demand for services, the clinic was relocated from a basement operation to a converted four-bedroom apartment occupying about 1,000 square feet of space.

Today, its staff includes:

- A part-time family practice physician;
- A part-time physician assistant;
- Two outreach workers;
- A part-time nurse;
- A part-time family planning counselor; and
- A part-time secretary.

The physician provides pre-natal care once a week, and free immunizations have been available since 1994.

In recognition of the success of its immunization program, in 1998 Plumley Village Health Services received an award from the state-sponsored Massachusetts Immunization Action Partnership for implementing an innovative approach to promote on-time immunizations.

To respond to the growing HIV infection rate, the clinic's bilingual staff provides anonymous testing once a week.

Outreach Activities

Serving a predominantly non-English speaking population has special demands. Cultural differences and fear must be overcome.

Outreach remains essential; trust must be built. The challenge of building trust in the community is compounded by the fact that 25 percent of the residents at Plumley Village move every year.

The cornerstone of Plumley Village Health Services is the outreach activities of its staff, especially the workers who are the conduit between the health center and residents. Spanish-speaking staff meet residents in many settings to build these strong relationships and provide diverse services. For instance, they make referrals to Head Start, potential employers, social service providers and education providers. The intention is to create a trusting relationship between outreach worker and resident, which leads to access to health care.

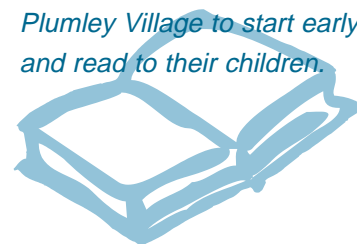
To meet the special needs of teenagers, a youth outreach worker manages the Healthy Teen program. The program addresses issues important to youth, including pregnancy, literacy, violence, smoking, education and substance abuse.

Plumley Village's Healthy Homes program is unique in its strategy. In 1998, the family planning counselor arranged 34 "parties" for 277 participants. At these "parties," the family planning counselor disseminated information on prenatal care, breast cancer, HIV, sexually transmitted diseases, birth control, domestic violence and lifestyle choices. The clinic provides the refreshments. Often, participants receive coupons redeemable at the local grocery store.

Collaboration: It's How Plumley Village Health Services Works

Plumley Village Health Services collaborates with many community agencies to strengthen its programs and monitor the developing needs within the community. Collaboration also results in linking residents with other service providers.

Collaborations have resulted in an annual health fair in which several dozen community agencies participate; and the statewide Reach Out and Read program, developed at Boston City Hospital, which encourages families at Plumley Village to start early and read to their children.



Plumley Village Health Services' Partners

UMass Memorial Health Care

The health care services available to the residents exist, in large part, because of the commitment of the local community hospital and its larger health system.

UMass Memorial Health Care contributes approximately 75 percent of Plumley Village Health Services' annual budget by paying for the salaries of many of the health care providers. In addition, the Plumley Village Health Center benefits from the expertise of hospital staff.

Foundations

Approximately 25 percent of Plumley Village Health Services' annual budget comes from local foundations. Typically, they fund specific programs or activities.

In 1999, the H. Arthur Smith Foundation awarded the clinic a three-year \$50,000 grant to fund cancer prevention and screening activities. The Daniels Foundation awarded the clinic \$30,000 for renovation.

The Community Builders, Inc.

The Community Builders, Inc. has made an investment in its residents because it recognizes the value of having residents who are healthy.

In its first four years, The Community Builders provided free space and janitorial service. Since its relocation, the clinic pays a monthly rent for its renovated space.

The Outlook for Plumley Village

"This community clinic, with its outreach activities, is essential to reaching this very vulnerable population," said Dr. Randi Wertheimer, medical director at Plumley

Village Health Services and a family physician on the UMass medical staff. "Healthy communities can only be achieved by teaching prevention and increasing access to care."

Plumley Village Health Services has a history of responding to the needs of the community it serves. And its forecast is equally responsive. In the coming year, these are among the planned programs:

- Smoking prevention and smoking cessation;
- Literacy support; and
- Youth programming.

The delivery of health care to residents where they live has proven an effective method of increasing access to health services.

To learn more about the Neighborhood Networks initiative, contact:

✉ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
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Fairfax, VA 22031-1207

Website www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org

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☎ Neighborhood Networks Information Center
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Visit our website at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org

